

PLATE V.—THE CHIPSTEAD ELM.

IN the scale of precedence among Forest trees, the Elm, which is indigenous to England, has a right, both with respect to beauty and utility, to claim a place next to the Oak in dignity and rank. One very important property, as regards the usefulness of its timber, is that of being able to bear the alternations of dryness and moisture, without rotting; which renders it more especially fit for all purposes connected with water, or exposure to the atmosphere. The hardness of its grain is another quality that adds to its value; nor ought its foliage to be forgotten; forming, as it may do, a substitute for hay and fodder, in times of scarcity: the Roman husbandman, indeed, frequently fed his cattle on the leaves of the Elm; hence Virgil reckons the redundancy of them among its excellencies:

"Fecundæ frondibus Ulmi."

No tree bears transplanting better than the Elm. It will suffer removal even at twenty years of age; which renders it very desirable for those who may wish to impart to new-built mansions the respectability which leafy shades, of apparently long standing, always confer on a habitation. The Elm, is indeed, peculiarly fitted for "the length of colonnade," with which our forefathers loved to make graceful and gradual entry to their hospitable halls. Loving society, yet averse from a crowd, delighting in fresh air, and in room to expand its roots, and affording its aid to all the weaker plants in its vicinity that may seek its support, it presents a pleasing emblem of the class of country gentlemen, whose abodes it is oftenest found to adorn and protect.

The Chipstead Elm stands on a rising ground, in a retired part of the pleasure-garden of George Polhill, Esq., of Chipstead Place, in Kent. It is sixty feet high; twenty feet in circumference at the base; and fifteen feet eight inches, at three feet and a half from the ground. It contains two hundred and sixty-eight feet of timber; but this bulk is comparatively small to what it would have been had it not sustained the loss of some large branches towards the centre. Its venerable trunk is richly mantled with ivy, and its appearance altogether savours enough of antiquity to bear out the tradition annexed to it, that in the time of Henry the Fifth a fair was held annually under its branches; the high road from Rye, in Sussex, to London, then passing close by it. Nor will that interest, which must be felt for an object by associating it even in the most distant manner with a name so renowned in history as that of our fifth Henry, be lessened by the reflection, that this fine tree has for its present owner a descendant of John Hampden, and one in whom both the patriotic feeling and the private virtues of that illustrious individual find no unworthy representative.

PLATE VI.—THE TUTBURY WYCH-ELM.

THE WYCH-ELM, or Wych Hazel, as it is sometimes called, from the resemblance that its leaves and young shoots bear to those of the Hazel, is a species of the Elm, which is valuable rather for the quantity of its timber than the quality of it. Since the long bow, for the making of which it was much esteemed in former times, has fallen entirely into disuse, its worth is proportionally lessened. It is, however, a fine spreading tree, and grows occasionally to a prodigious size. The Tutbury Wych-Elm is one of the most remarkable specimens of the sort in the kingdom, and is thus mentioned by Shaw, in his History of Staffordshire:—"In the road leading from Tutbury to Rolleston is a very large and beautiful Wych-Elm, the bole of which is remarkably straight, thick and lofty; having eight noble branches, the size of common trees, which spread their umbrageous foliage luxuriantly around, forming a magnificent and graceful feature, both in the near and distant prospect. This, if not at present, will, in a few years, be as great a curiosity in the vegetable world, as the famous Wych-Elm at Field, described by Doctor Plot."

The trunk of this tree is twelve feet long, and sixteen feet nine inches in circumference, at the height of five feet from the ground; seven feet higher, it divides into the "eight noble branches," which are nearly fifty feet high and extend between forty and fifty feet from the centre of the tree, which contains six hundred and eighty-nine cubic feet of timber. The interest that so beautiful an object is likely to impart to the spot on which it stands is, in the present instance, increased by the pleasing prospect that it commands of Tutbury Castle; which lifts its venerable remains in the distance, and awakens a train of interesting reflections, connected with a remembrance of the virtues of one of its earliest owners, "Time-honored Lancaster," and of the vicissitudes to which it has been exposed, during the ages that have now left it only the vestige of what it was in the days of feudal greatness.